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THE HELMS AMENDMENT

ANNCR:

SENATOR JESSE HELMS OF NORTH CAROLINA HAS INTRODUCED LEGISLATION IN THE SENATE CALLING FOR A SIX MONTH TEMPORARY LIFTING OF U.S. ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST RHODESIA. THE LEGISLATION -- IN THE FORM OF AN AMENDMENT -- IS CAUSING CONSIDERABLE CONTROVERSY. VOA'S AFRICA NEWS EDITOR DAVID WILLIAMS HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

SENATOR HELMS INTRODUCED A SIMILAR AMENDMENT CALLING FOR THE UNITED STATES TO LIFT ITS TRADE EMBARGO A FEW WEEKS AGO. IT CALLED FOR A FIFTEEN MONTH SUSPENSION. THAT AMENDMENT TO THE FOREIGN RELATIONS AUTHORIZATION ACT FAILED BY A FORTY EIGHT TO FORTY TWO VOTE. NOW SUPPORTERS OF A TEMPORARY LIFTING OF U.S. SANCTIONS HAVE INTRODUCED A COMPROMISE THEY FEEL WILL PASS THE SENATE. IT CALLS FOR A SIX MONTH SUSPENSION TO BEGIN IMMEDIATELY AND LAST UNTIL THE END OF THE YEAR. A VOTE IS EXPECTED EARLY NEXT WEEK.

SUPPORTERS SAY THEY THINK THEY HAVE THE VOTES TO WIN. IF THEY DO, THE AMENDMENT -- WHICH WOULD BE TACKED ON TO THE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE BILL--WOULD THEN GO TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR APPROVAL. IT COULD STILL FACE A PRESIDENTIAL VETO. SUPPORTERS OF A SUSPENSION OF RHODESIAN SANCTIONS SAY THEY CAREFULLY CHOSE THE SECURITY ASSISTANCE BILL -- NOT ONLY BECAUSE IT WAS CONVENINENT -- BUT BECAUSE IT CONTAINS SEVERAL ITEMS CONSIDERED CRUCIAL BY THE ADMINISTRATION INCLUDING A LIFTING OF THE ARMS BAN AGAINST TURKEY.

THE ADMINISTRATION SAYS IT STRONGLY OPPOSES THE HELMS AMENDMENT AND IS TRYING TO MOBILIZE CONGRESSIONAL BACKING FOR ITS POSITION. THE STATE DEPARTMENT SAYS THE AMENDMENT WOULD PLACE THE UNITED STATES IN OPEN DEFIANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW. THE DEPARTMENT CONTENDS IT WOULD BE A MAJOR REVERSAL OF AMERICAN POLICY, WOULD DAMAGE U.S. RELATIONS THROUGHOUT AFRICA, AND REDUCE AMERICA'S ABILITY TO URGE THE GUERRILLAS TO ACCEPT A FAIR SETTLEMENT. THE STATE DEPARTMENT POINTS OUT THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN NEGOTIATING THE NAMIBIAN INDEPENDENCE ISSUE AND WANTS TO RESOLVE THE RHODESIAN PROBLEM IN A SIMILAR MANNER. THE UNITED STATES -- WITH THE ONE EXCEPTION OF CHROME -- HAS FAITHFULLY ADHERED TO THE INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS PASSED BY THE UNITED NATIONS A DECADE AGO. AT THE U.N., THE AFRICA GROUP HAS ALSO CONDEMNED THE HELMS AMENDMENT SAYING ITS PASSAGE WOULD BE CONSTRUED AS ACTIVE AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR MINORITY RULE IN RHODESIA.

IF THE ADMINISTRATION IS TRYING TO MOBILIZE SUPPORT AGAINST HELMS, THE AMENDMENT SUPPORTERS HAVE ALSO BEEN BUSY. THEY HAVE ENLISTED THE AID OF ONE OF RHODESIA'S BLACK LEADERS -- BISHOP ABEL MUZOREWA -- WHO IS IN WASHINGTON TO CAMPAIGN FOR AN END TO SANCTIONS. HE SAYS THE INTERNAL AGREEMENT IS A BLUEPRINT FOR PEACE, DEMOCRACY, AND STABILITY IN RHODESIA AND THERE WILL BE BLACK RULE AT THE END OF THE YEAR. HE IS APPEALING THAT SANCTIONS APPLIED TO BRING AN END TO WHITE MINORITY RULE SHOULD NOT NOW BE USED AGAINST THE COUNTRY'S BLACK MAJORITY. THE BISHOP SAID A U.S. SUSPENSION OF SANCTIONS WOULD TRIGGER SIMILAR MOVES IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

JS/RD